

The Include Us Advocacy Project, Nepal

NFDN PROJECT EVALUATION SUMMARY
OCTOBER 2019 - SEPTEMBER 2024

If you are wanting an example of a CBM supported project that demonstrates impact, look no further than what has been achieved in the *Include Us* advocacy project in Nepal over the last five years.

This project was led by the National Federation for the Disabled Nepal (NFDN) - the national umbrella body for disability organisations in Nepal. The project's focus was firstly to improve national and local government policies and action around accessibility to government services. It also sought to improve people's access to justice.

HOW DID NFDN DO THIS?

The approach was to influence government policies at the national level, and then use this as a precedent to push local governments in Nepal's seven provinces to also improve their policies and systems to be more disability inclusive.

IMPRESSIVE ACHIEVEMENTS

A recent evaluation team looked at what had been achieved through the project. This is what was found:

At a National level, NFDN lobbied and advised the government to:

- Get a National Disability Policy developed and passed in parliament. This now sets up a foundation for everything controlled by national government - from building codes and education to electoral processes - to consider disability inclusion.
- Include a disability question in the National Census of 2021. This means, for the first time, government at all levels has information about the number of people with a disability. Government should now be better able to plan and budget for disability issues. Additionally, it also sets an expectation that future government surveys collect this disability information.
- Through research with the National Human Rights Commission, the issue of barriers to accessing justice for people with disability became an advocacy focus. In the provinces, this led to training for police, court officials and support for individuals through the justice system.

HOW PEOPLE WITH DISABILITY MISS OUT ON JUSTICE

In the provinces, Organisations of People with Disabilities (OPD) lobbied their local governments to improve accessibility to government services – be they health clinics, social welfare offices or courts. Talking about the things that stopped people accessing justice was a good way to get conversations started with community groups. It became clear how people with certain disabilities in their own villages were missing out on justice and created a movement for change.

IMPROVING ACCESSIBILITY TO GOVERNMENT SERVICES

There was a focus on improving accessibility in government services and ensuring that national standards were considered. This is also one of the few projects that has a focus on digital accessibility, in addition to other accessibility needs like accessible ramps, toilets and doorways. To enhance digital accessibility, government departments were encouraged to improve their websites and portals, so they were accessible to people using screen readers, such as people who are blind or have low vision.

PRECEDENTS CREATE PRESSURE

What the evaluation team saw was a ripple effect whereby improvements and renovations in one government department created precedents and pressure for other government service providers in the same municipality or province to do the same. Keeping duty-bearers accountable for commitments and quality control around accessibility modifications was a good area of focus that could bring people together for action.

STRONGER RURAL OPDS

The project also provided small allocations of funds to 33 rural OPDs, to help them improve their organisational functioning. This has led to increases in membership. These OPDs are now more active as advocates for local change. Most of them have been successful in getting their local government to take more action around disability rights and inclusion. Half of these organisations have now attracted further funding from other groups to keep their wheels turning.

INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY

The project also supported a group of around 20 people with intellectual disabilities to improve their social connections, their communication skills and have an overall better understanding of their rights. For those directly involved in this training, and their families, the impact was transformational. NFDN is making sure that all their publications are developed in an Easy-Read version. Through this process, they are paying a group of people with intellectual disabilities to check and edit the drafts of all Easy-Read publications, before they go to print.

Right: NFDN is committed to ensuring people with disabilities can access information that is important to them. Here we see a man who is blind reading a braille version of the NFDN report on access to justice.



THINK ABOUT FOR NEXT TIME

The evaluation highlighted some issues to consider in future advocacy projects:

- Do not try to do too much. While often there was a lot going on, sometimes it was "spread too thin".
- Make sure that the achievements and learning at national level are communicated well to the provincial teams. Sometimes this did not happen as well as it could have.
- Be realistic in what requests are made to government. For example, there is no point recommending that certain government offices employ sign language interpreters if there are not enough trained interpreters to employ. Additionally, target the right people in government – those who are in the position to make decisions about budgets or future plans.
- The activities that engaged people with intellectual disability achieved so much. Think about taking a similar approach with other groups with a particular impairment.
- Take care not to undermine the spirit of volunteerism by providing payments to OPD members to do advocacy (apart from costs for transport). This will create expectations of future payments, and potentially stop people from taking local initiatives.

RICH LEARNINGS

Overall, the evaluation found that project made some impressive achievements that can be built on and used to foster more change-makers from NFDN's OPD members.

There is much that CBM-Global has learned from this project approach, especially around how OPD capacity strengthening can go hand in hand with advocacy at a national and local level on issues that are highly relevant to local people with disability and their families.

The Include Us project (2019 to 2024), implemented by the National Federation of the Disabled Nepal (NFDN), had an advocacy focus. It brought together OPD members in this Federation to advocate for government policy and practice change, particularly around the areas of accessibility, access to justice, disability data, and organisational capacity building. This occurred both at a national level and in Nepal's seven provinces.